



How should I dispose of my contaminated belongings?

Removing your clothing:

- Quickly take off clothing that may have ricin on it. Any clothing that has to be pulled over the head should be cut off the body instead of pulled over the head. If you are helping other people remove their clothing, try to avoid touching any contaminated areas, and remove the clothing as quickly as possible.

Washing yourself:

- As quickly as possible, wash any ricin from your skin with large amounts of soap and water. If your eyes are burning or your vision is blurred, rinse your eyes with plain water for 10 to 15 minutes. If you wear contacts, throw them out with the contaminated clothing. If you wear glasses, wash them with soap and water. You can put your glasses back on after you wash them.

Disposing of your clothes:

- After you have washed yourself, place your clothing inside a plastic bag. Avoid touching contaminated areas of the clothing or use gloves to remove clothing.
- Seal the bag, and then seal that bag inside another plastic bag.
- When the local or state health department or emergency personnel arrive, tell them what you did with your clothes.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Local Resources

For information on Ricin Toxin visit our website at:

<http://www.tulsa-health.org/community-health/epidemiology/>

or write:

Tulsa Health Department
Planning & Epidemiology
5051 S. 129th E. Ave.
Tulsa, OK 74134

Other Contact Information:

Phone: 918/595-4505

Fax: 918/595-4588

E-mail: epidemiology@tulsa-health.org

For more information on Ricin Toxin, visit:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (888) 232-4636
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/ricin/facts.asp>



**TULSA HEALTH
DEPARTMENT**

Prepared by Planning & Epidemiology



Ricin Toxin

Ricinus communis

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) classifies agents with recognized bioterrorism potential into three priority areas (A, B, and C). Ricin toxin is classified as a Category B agent. Category B agents are those that:

- are moderately easy to disseminate,
- result in moderate morbidity rates and low mortality rates, and
- require specific enhancements of CDC's diagnostic capacity and enhanced disease surveillance.

Ricin poisoning would most likely be a deliberate act and will primarily be used by terrorists to cause chaos, confusion and fear in the population. Ricin poison is several times deadlier than cobra venom. It works by getting inside the cells of a person's body and preventing the cells from making the proteins they need. Without the proteins, cells die. Eventually this is harmful to the whole body, and death may occur.

TULSA HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Ricin Toxin



What is Ricin?

- Ricin is a poison that can be made from the waste left over from processing castor beans.
- It can be in the form of a powder, a mist, or a pellet, or it can be dissolved in water or weak acid.



Castor Beans

How do you get Ricin poisoning?

- Ricin poisoning would take a deliberate act of terrorism for a person to be exposed. Accidental exposure is highly unlikely.
- People can breathe in ricin mist or powder and be poisoned.
- Ricin can also get into water or food and then be swallowed.
- Depending on the route of exposure (such as injection or inhalation), as little as 500 micrograms of ricin could be enough to kill an adult. This dose (500 micrograms) would be about the size of the head of a pin. A greater amount would likely be needed to kill people if the ricin were swallowed.
- Ricin poisoning is not contagious and cannot be spread from person to person.

What are the symptoms of Ricin poisoning?

Symptoms may appear differently depending if the poison was inhaled or ingested.

Inhalation: Symptoms may occur within 8 hours and would likely be:

- respiratory distress (difficulty breathing),
- fever,
- cough,
- nausea, and
- tightness in the chest.

Heavy sweating may follow as well as fluid building up in the lungs (pulmonary edema). This would make breathing even more difficult, and the skin might turn blue. Finally, low blood pressure and respiratory failure may occur, leading to death.

Ingestion: initial symptoms typically occur in less than 6 hours and may be:

- vomiting and diarrhea that may become bloody,
- severe dehydration and low blood pressure,
- hallucinations,
- seizures, and
- blood in the urine.

Within several days, the person's liver, spleen, and kidneys might stop working, and the person could die.

Showing these signs and symptoms does not necessarily mean that a person has been exposed to ricin.

Who is more likely to get Ricin poisoning?

Anyone can get Ricin poisoning but it would most likely be used in aerosol form in:

- the ventilation system of an office building or shopping mall, or
- a subway or train station.



Is there a treatment or a vaccine for Ricin poisoning?

- There is no effective treatment for ricin poisoning.
- Treatment is aimed at easing the symptoms and simply making the patient comfortable.
- There is not a vaccine for ricin.

How can I protect myself from Ricin poisoning if I have been exposed?

Since ricin poisoning would likely result from an act terrorism, there is no real way to prevent exposure. If you do become exposed to Ricin, here are some steps to follow:

- First, get fresh air by leaving the area where the ricin was released. If you are near a release of ricin, emergency coordinators may tell you where to go.
- If you think you may have been exposed to ricin, you should remove your clothing, rapidly wash your entire body and get medical care as quickly as possible.